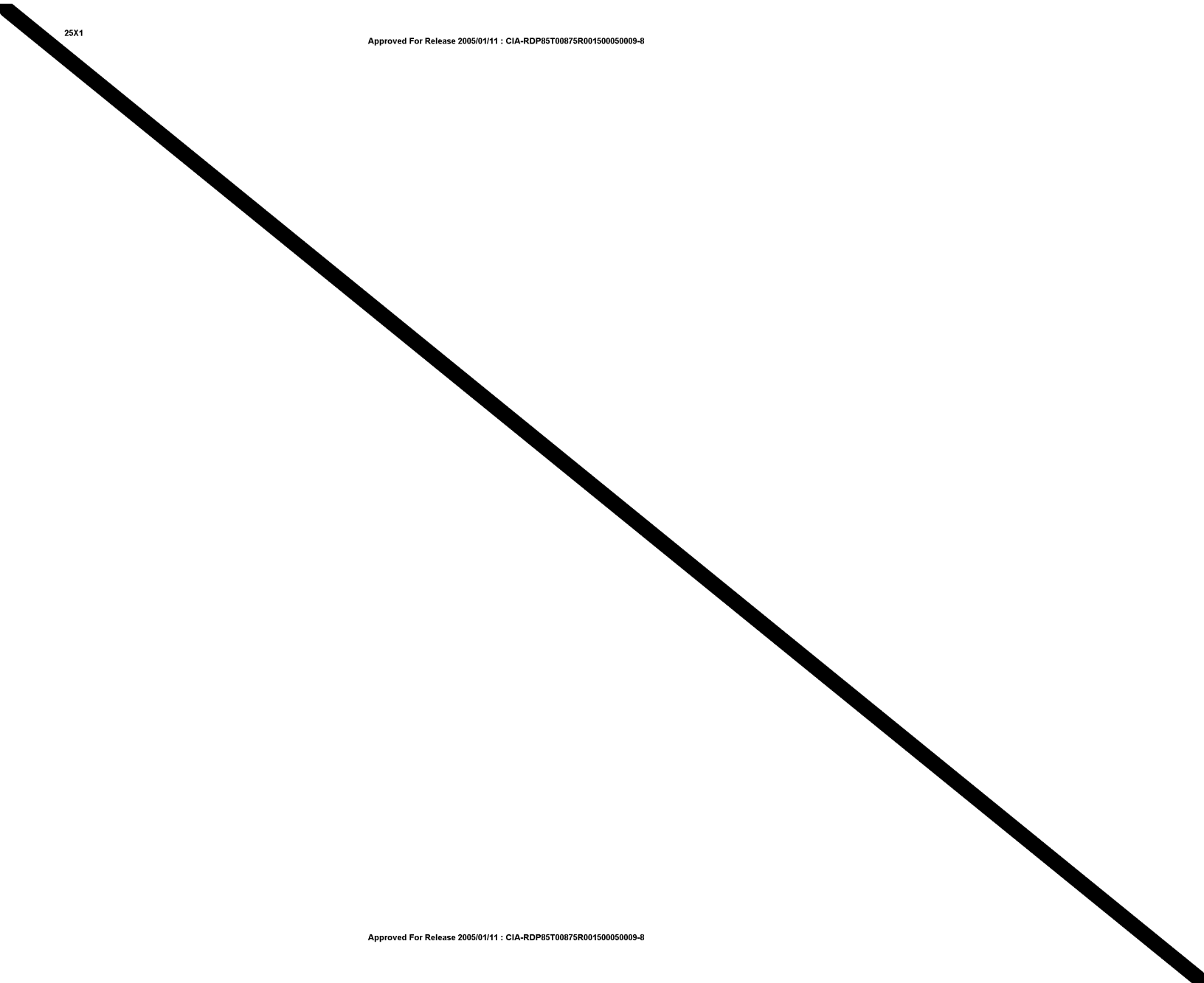

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Secret

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

# *WEEKLY SUMMARY*

## *Special Report*

*France: The Race Is On*



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16 February 1973
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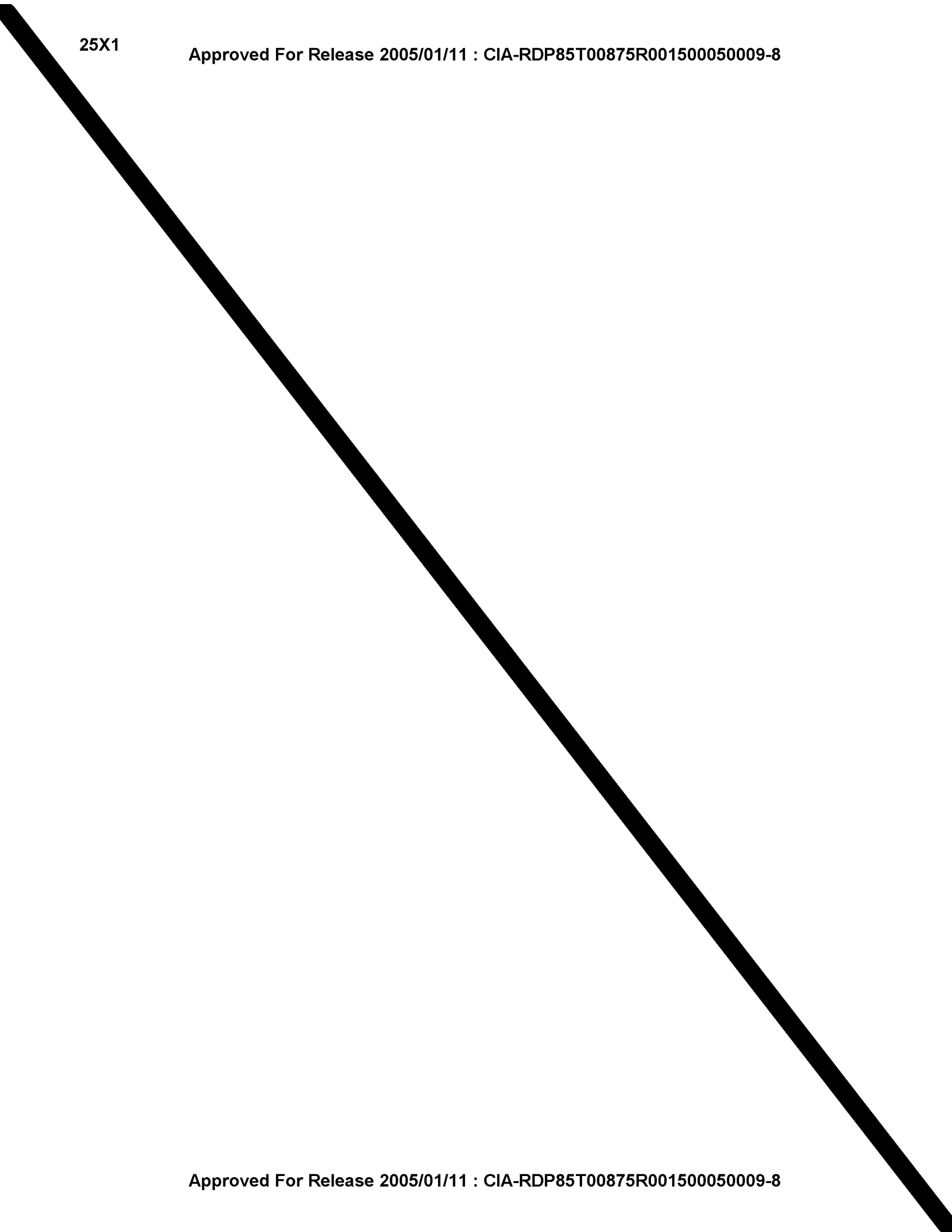

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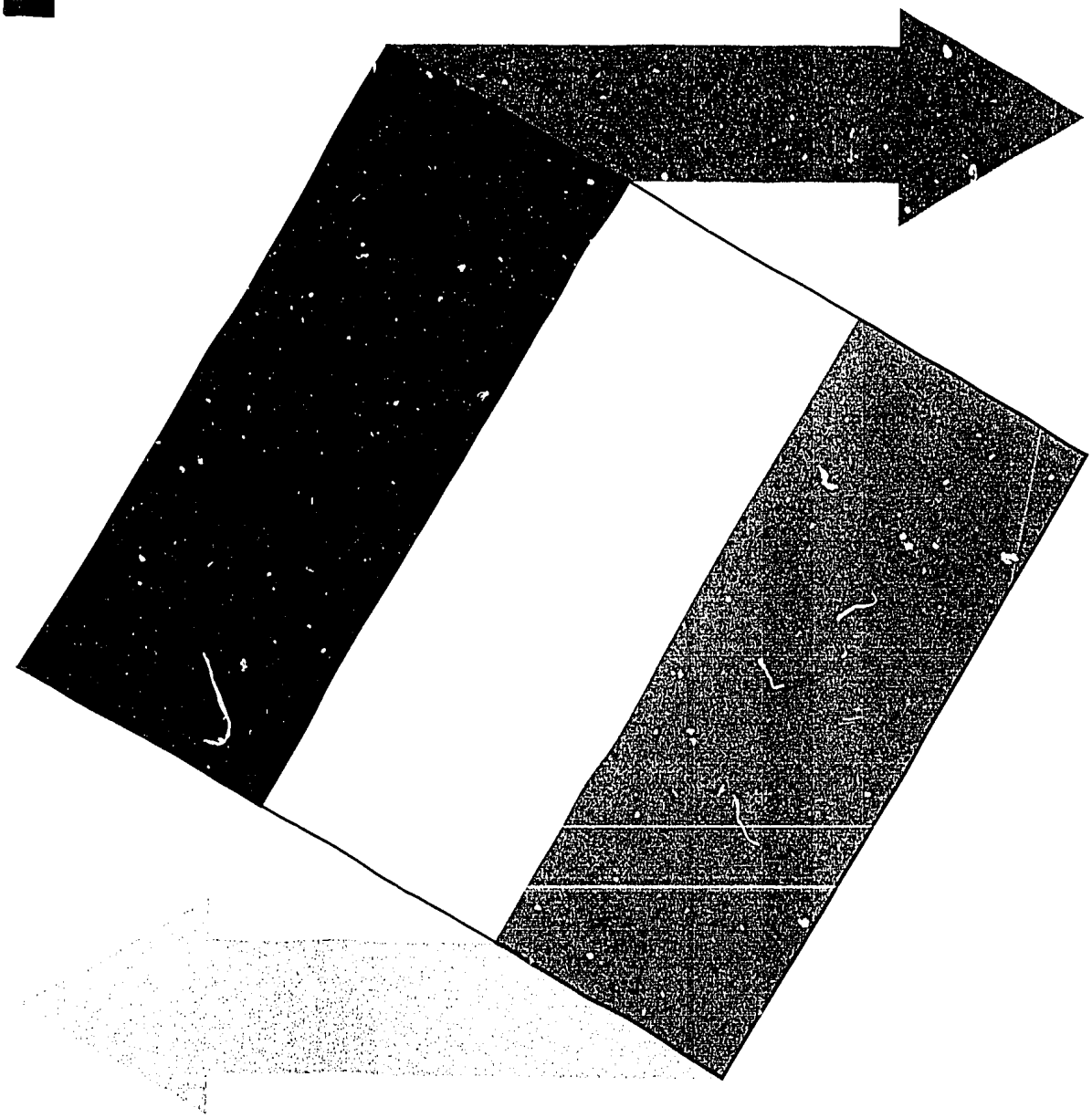
# FRANCE



# the race is on

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### Sans De Gaulle

On two successive Sundays next month, the Gaullist party faces its first elections without De Gaulle. It has been watching with gathering gloom what the poll-takers have been telling about voter preferences.

Since the campaign got under way last fall, the government has been plagued by persistent scandals, by internal dissension, and by lackluster campaigning. Most of all, it has been handicapped by inflation, on which it is plainly vulnerable. The left, on the other hand, has put on a good show of unity and has managed to capture the headlines on numerous occasions. As a result, the left has surged into a substantial lead in voter-preference polls.

These polls oversimplify the complex French election system, and the structure of the election districts favors the government. France has a single-member district, two-round election system—one which favors large, nationwide parties like the Gaullists that can appeal not only to the ideologically faithful but also to the uncommitted voter. The present election districts are drawn to give less representation to urban and suburban areas, where the leftist voters reside, than to rural regions that usually support the government coalition. This means that voter preferences do not always translate into assembly seats. Still, the elections on 4 and 11 March are certainly going to reduce the size of the huge bulge in assembly seats won by the Gaullist coalition after the 1968 troubles. The losses will come primarily from the Gaullist ranks because their coalition partners are mostly running in safe districts. As matters stand now, the Pompidou team stands to lose between 70 to 140 seats of its present 365-odd seats in the 490-seat assembly.

**French Public Opinion Polls**

| | 1972 | | | 1973 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. | Jan. | Feb. |
| Government Coalition | 45 | 42 | 38 | 37 | 35 |
| Leftist Alliance | 42 | 43 | 46 | 47 | 47 |
| Centrists | 13 | 13 | 15 | 16 | 17 |

### The Pompidou Coalition

Since President Pompidou's ouster of controversial Jacques Chaban-Delmas as premier in favor of simon-pure Gaullist Pierre Messmer last June, the Gaullists at least have enjoyed a greater sense of cohesion, but rifts in the coalition remain and sometimes come into the open. In December, for example, it became clear that relations among the secretaries-general of the three parties—the Gaullist Union of Democrats for the Republic, the Independent Republicans, and a small centrist party—were growing acrimonious. Gaullist party secretary Alain Peyrefitte came under heavy fire; it was said he could not make decisions and lacked vision in planning election strategy. Pompidou was forced to intervene personally, warning party leaders against the dangers of narrow partisanship in the face of growing public support for the united left. Despite his admonition, it took weeks of semi-public wrangling before the coalition members could agree on single candidates for most of the election districts. While the lion's share of those selected were Gaullists, the lineup represents a more equitable distribution than in previous elections. More important, the agreement means the coalition will pose a single opponent to the left in some 433 of the 490 election districts. Nevertheless, serious problems remain [redacted]

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[redacted]

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Sticky charges of corruption among the Gaullists have contributed to the friction within the coalition. A series of scandals—the latest broke in September—has rocked the party almost continuously since mid-1971, and each has explicitly or implicitly involved Gaullists in fraud, abuse of public confidence, influence peddling, extortion, or outright theft. The government was able to dampen publicity on the September

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incident, but taken together the scandals have compromised the party's image after 11 untainted years under De Gaulle.

The government is deeply in trouble over inflation. Prices are increasing at the fastest rate in ten years, and the French electorate traditionally votes its concern on bread-and-butter issues. The government is, of course, aware of this and announced new measures aimed at slowing inflation. These measures are not likely to have much effect—and in any case not before the election. Pompidou feels he must avoid anything so unpopular as wage controls, even though they might be more effective. Government leaders are attempting to minimize the impact of the price increases by stressing that other industrialized nations also suffer from inflation, some to a greater extent than France, and that the competitive position of French exports thus far has not been imperiled. These explanations have not impressed the voters, many of whom feel the fruits of economic growth are not being equitably shared. At any rate, the opposition is getting considerable campaign mileage out of the alarming situation.

The campaign has been dragging along since early fall, and government and opposition alike face a serious risk of overexposure. The government-controlled television network has been flooded with complaints about too much political reporting during prime-viewing time. The surfeit could well lead to voter apathy, which would be a serious problem for the Gaullists and their partners. The election this year will in no way be a repeat of 1968, when public reaction to the student and labor crisis helped swell the Gaullist vote to record proportions. With no specter of revolutionary chaos to confront them, French voters are likely to revert to their more usual voting habits. A high rate of abstention would tend to hurt the governing coalition because the leftists—the Communists in particular—are highly efficient in getting their supporters to the polls.

So far, coalition forces have had a tough time demonstrating the superiority of their policies. This being the case, they have resorted to

**GOVERNMENT COALITION LEADERS**

President Georges Pompidou

Economics and Finance Minister Giscard d'Estaing

[redacted]

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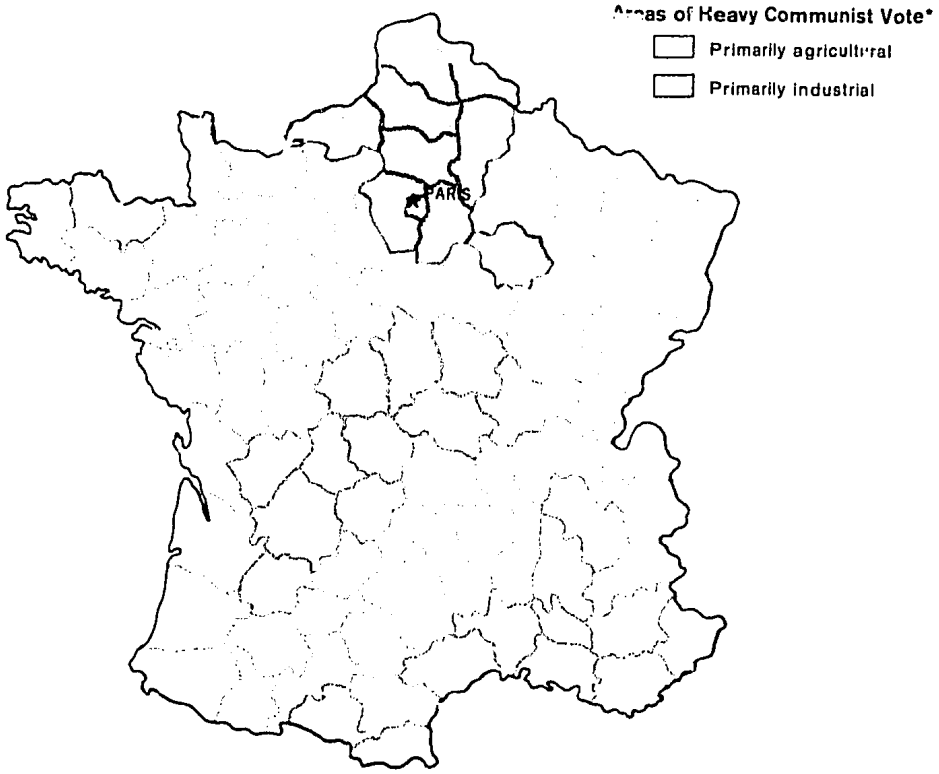
the time-honored campaign theme of the leftist menace. [redacted]

Although government spokesmen loudly proclaim that only an anti-Communist regime can maintain France's special, but independent, relationship with the USSR, polls show that the left no longer is a bogey to the middle-of-the-road voter. For its part, the opposition continues to attack the government for corruption, inefficiency and indifference to the society's under-privileged. The central theme of the government's campaign is support for President Pompidou and his policies. The election results will be regarded as a test of voter sentiment and could affect his decision on whether to try again for the presidency in 1976.

### A United Left

The left in France is generally as fractious and divided as elsewhere, but last June French leftists got together on a precedent-setting "common accord for governing." While the accord got off to a slow start, by November the leftists were beginning to show that they could give the government a good run for its money. More tightly organized than the government coalition, the leftist alliance—the Communists, the Socialists and the left-Radicals—has been better able temporarily to submerge deep-seated differences in the interests of the campaign. Many Communists, for example, believe that their party leaders compromised their ideals by agreeing to the accord, and many Socialists feel impelled to

**Communist Electoral Strongholds**

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*Areas of over 20% Communist vote of total registered electorate.

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counter allegations that they have become dupes of their ally.

Although there appears to be no personal rivalry between Communist leader Georges Marchais and Socialist chief Francois Mitterrand, most French Communists realize the latter hopes to become the uncontested spokesman for the left in preparation for a presidential bid in 1976. To the French electorate in general, he is seen as a shrewd opportunist who gave De Gaulle a close run in the 1965 presidential race and who pulled the disunited left together last year. Twice in the past six months, Mitterrand has artfully grabbed the spotlight. He convened a regional meeting of the Socialist International in Paris on 13-14 January, attended by Israeli leader Golda Meir. The meeting increased his stature as a national and international figure. Earlier, in August, he publicly traded insults with the Soviet ambassador over Jewish emigration from the USSR and Soviet policy toward Czechoslovakia. The Communists, boxed in by their own ambiguous position and conflicting loyalties, came off a poor second.

Regardless of the outcome of the election, the prestige of Francois Mitterrand would be significantly enhanced. He hopes that, by presenting a credible leftist alternative to the present government, he will, over time, be able to wean away from the Communists a number of voters who want fundamental change but who are not ideologically committed to communism. Mitterrand's strategy calls for cooperating with the Communists in attacking the government and in defending the common leftist program, while differentiating himself from the Communists on questions of individual liberty, democratic procedures, and certain foreign policy issues. Mitterrand has shown great skill in juggling these conflicting demands and has already emerged as the foremost leftist leader. If under his stewardship the Socialists win more impressive gains in the elections than the Communists—and some polls indicate that is possible—Mitterrand will be in a strong position for 1976. In the 1965 presidential contest, he forced De Gaulle into a runoff ballot and won 44.8% of the vote on the second round.

**THE UNITED LEFT**

**Communist Leader Georges Marchais**

**Socialist Chief Francois Mitterrand**

Moscow has long been an election cross for the French Communists. Mitterrand is anathema to the Soviets, who consider him a narrowly ambitious politician. To Moscow, the alliance of the French Communists with such a man illustrates the underlying inconsistency of their position. The Communists feel they must keep their ideological fences with Moscow in good repair; at the same time, they must emphasize their willingness to abide by the rules of French democracy. They must maintain their opposition to the government coalition even though Moscow gives them little help. The speech of Kremlin ideologist Suslov at the French Communist Congress last month implied Soviet reservations about the joint leftist program. Marchais subsequently met with Soviet party chief Brezhnev in Moscow, but evidently got nowhere. On the contrary, by continuing to cite Franco-Soviet relations as a model for other West European nations and by scheduling the Brezhnev-Pompidou meeting in mid-January, Moscow has emphasized that it prefers

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25X1 [redacted] President Pompidou may attempt to exploit his Russian trip as an indication of his government's ability to deal with the USSR, but since the visit centered on foreign policy issues—in which the French electorate is notoriously uninterested—he may not get much mileage out of it.

### The Centrist Connection

The centrist parties constitute a small but pivotal grouping. They formed a coalition of sorts some 18 months ago. Baptized the Movement for Reform, it brings together what the Gaullists call the left-overs of the Fourth Republic, i.e., leaders and voters unable to find a place in the polarized politics of the Fifth Republic established in 1958 by De Gaulle. The reformers are led by Jean Lecanuet and Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber. The Lecanuet faction is more conservative on economic and social issues than many Gaullists, while its partners are slightly left of center. The movement agrees on the need to decentralize government administration; to shift budget priorities

### THE CENTRIST COALITION

Jean Lecanuet

Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber

from prestige projects like the Concorde to social and economic projects at home; to move more rapidly in developing European Community political institutions. The two leaders differ on tactical goals. Lecanuet is intent on blocking a leftist victory and enjoys relatively good relations with Pompidou and other government leaders. Servan-Schreiber is committed to defeating the government and is considered a *bete noire* by many government supporters.

The Gaullists are losing ground, and Pompidou could find himself in a situation after the election in which he would have to negotiate with the centrists—most likely with Lecanuet, who wants to enter the government. Even if Pompidou retains a working majority in the new assembly, he may still wish to develop a relationship with some reformers. He would have the option of formally inviting some of them into the government or of developing an informal working relationship with certain deputies. Most reformers would prefer to enter the government—a move which would reunite the old centrist bloc. Some, however, still have lingering hopes of translating their dream of a true centrist regime into reality and are hesitant about being co-opted into Pompidou's fold.

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### System May Favor the Government

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The French election system of single-member districts and two rounds of voting favors large, nationwide parties like the Gaullists that can appeal both to the ideologically faithful and to the uncommitted voter. French election districts have been drawn to give less representation to urban and suburban areas, which are predominantly leftist, than to rural regions that support the government coalition. Extensive gerrymandering and a substantial population shift from rural to urban areas result in great disparities in the number of voters represented in various districts. On the average, it takes a little over 30,000 votes to elect a Gaullist deputy in rural France but nearly 130,000 to elect a Communist in a Paris suburb.

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Few contests are settled on the first round because a candidate must have an absolute majority to win right off. In 1968, for example, only 154 out of 487 races were decided on the first round. Those candidates who receive at least 10 percent of the vote on the first ballot can run on the second. This requirement tends to eliminate splinter parties and set up a head-on contest between the left and right in most districts. After the first round there will be a critical week of bargaining as candidates decide whether and under what conditions to run on the second ballot. The government parties may gain more in the runoff contests than the left, whose percentage of the vote has dropped between rounds in every legislative contest except one since 1958.

The government parties have already agreed on a single candidate to represent them in over three-fourths of the election districts and hence will not have to engage in potentially divisive bargaining. The coalition may try to strike a few informal agreements with opposition Reformist candidates, whose presence in the runoff race could draw votes from the government. In contrast, the left still faces critical decisions on which candidates will represent it on the second ballot. Although each of the leftist parties has theoretically agreed that its candidates will withdraw in favor of the one "best placed" to win, the formula is subject to varying interpretations.

The question of withdrawal will be particularly difficult in cases where the Socialist candidate obtains fewer votes on the first ballot, but is in a more promising position to attract support from center-left voters in the second round.

The Communist stance on withdrawal will be particularly significant because of differing voter reactions when there is a choice between a Pompidolian and a Socialist as opposed to a decision between a Pompidolian and a

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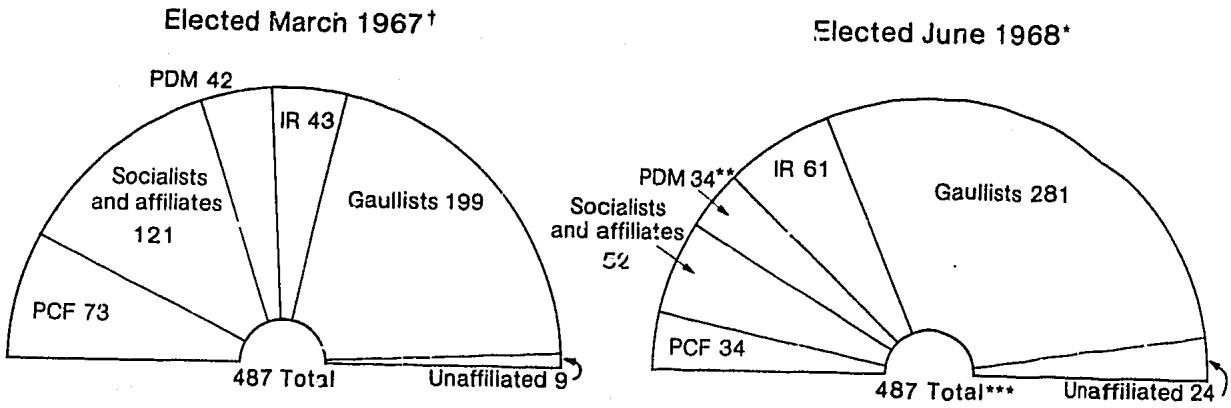
## Party Strength in the National Assembly




PCF-French Communist Party
IR-Independent Republicans
PDM-Progress and Modern Democracy (includes former MRP and CNIP)
Parties in Government Coalition

†*The Gaullists and their coalition partner the Independent Republican Party were two votes short of a majority but on most issues could count on additional votes from the PDM or the unaffiliated deputies.*

**Figures as of 1972.*
***Some of the PDM are considered part of the Government coalition.*
****One seat in the Assembly is presently vacant.*

## Results of National Assembly Elections, 1967-1968

| Party or Federation | Percent of vote | |
|---|---|---|
| | First ballot | Second ballot |
| **1967** | | |
| Gaullists and affiliates | 37.8 | 42.6 |
| Socialists and affiliates | 21 | 25 |
| Communists | 22.4 | 21.4 |
| Democratic Center | 12.8 | 7.1 |
| Others | 6 | 3.9 |
| **1968** | | |
| Gaullists and affiliates | 43.65 | 48.8 |
| Socialists and affiliates | 16.50 | 21.6 |
| Communists | 20.03 | 19.9 |
| Progress and Modern Democracy | 10.34 | 8.1 |
| Others | 9.48 | 1.6 |

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Communist. The middle-of-the-road centrists and uncommitted voters, the latter make up some 30 percent of the electorate, will hold the key. Recent polls indicate that centrist votes on the ballot will split nearly seven-to-one in favor of the Pompidolian who is opposed by a Communist, but almost evenly if the contest is between a Pompidolian and a Socialist. Other polls indicate that two out of five Socialist voters would opt for the government parties rather than vote for a Communist on the second ballot. For the left to make significant gains, then, Socialists rather than Communists must lead the ticket after the first round, or the Communists must withdraw in unprecedented numbers even if their candidates are out in front.

The depth and breadth of the anti-Communist reflex among the uncommitted voters has never been tested. The fact that the French vote in the first round against their grievances and in the second against their fears should work in favor of the government coalition, particularly if it can exploit the latent, though evidently diminishing, public fear that a leftist victory would radically change the French system.

Preferences measured in public opinion polls, while generally quite accurate in predicting percentages of votes in the first round, do not reflect the makeup of the ensuing assembly. In the election of March 1967, the Gaullists and Independent Republicans won 42 percent of the vote and 242 of the 485 seats, the left won 45 percent of the vote and 194 seats, while the centrist parties won 13 percent of the vote and 41 seats. This was very close to the pre-election polls, and current polls are similar to those in 1967. Even if the voting pattern were repeated, it would not necessarily bring about a parallel distribution of seats. In 1967 there was a general swing to the left throughout the country. Today, the left's strength is less evenly distributed geographically. The left is particularly strong in the south and southwest and in the industrial suburbs of the major cities, but relatively weak elsewhere.

### Possible Outcomes

Basically, the election this year could turn out in one of four ways. First, the present coalition could emerge with a reduced but workable majority in the assembly and lose some of its Gaullist coloration. Second, the government could lose enough seats to force it to broaden the coalition by including some centrist opposition elements. Third, the government's losses could be so extensive that it would have to rally the right wing of the Socialist Party as well as most of the centrists now in the opposition. Finally, the left could win a majority.

The first situation—a reduced but workable majority—is still the hope of the governing coalition. In this event, Pompidou probably would make only minor changes in the government and its policies. Because the Independent Republicans may well gain seats and the Gaullists lose some, power within the coalition would be more evenly distributed. Valery Giscard d'Estaing would be given a greater voice in formulating national policy. While a government based on such a division of power would not discard major Gaullist tenets such as national independence, a strong national defense and a distrust of supranational institutions, it would not be as wholly Gaullist in outlook as the present government. Giscard and his party hold slightly more favorable attitudes toward the European Communities and the Atlantic Alliance than the Gaullists, and are generally less strident on the Middle East, Vietnam and other aspects of Gaullist foreign policy. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this outcome would be the personal implications for Giscard d'Estaing. He has never concealed his presidential ambitions, and opinion polls consistently put him at the top of the list of French politicians with a good political future. Giscard clearly hopes the election results will enhance his prestige and bargaining power within the coalition. In certain circumstances, President Pompidou might even consider offering him the prime ministry.

In the second situation—losses heavy enough to deny the coalition a working majority—the President would be forced to change the composition of the government rather extensively. He would probably seek a new prime minister, and it is almost certain that the center parties would insist on several portfolios, including a major post for Jean Lecanuet. Pompidou could live with this.

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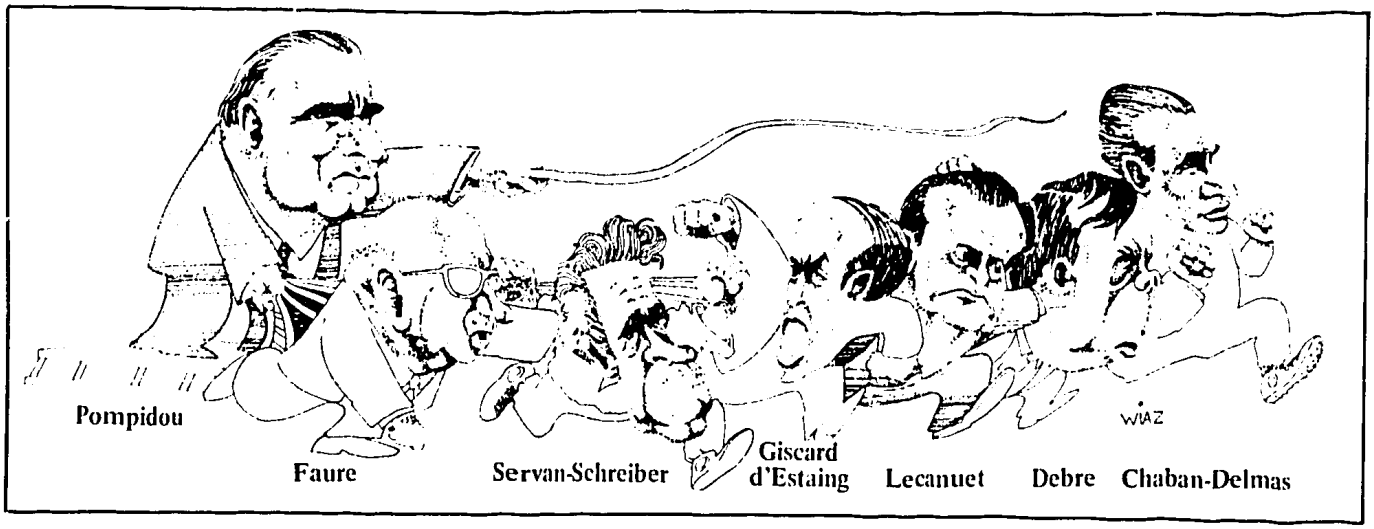
The immediate impact on government policy probably would not be profound. He would still remain in full command, and he might even take the opportunity to absorb some centrists to dilute Giscard's influence. Over time, however, the influence of the centrists would undoubtedly be felt, and both domestic and foreign policy would undergo changes. Centrist forces have not clearly spelled out the specific policy changes they desire. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the increased influence in such a government of moderate political leaders—who are basically more favorably disposed toward the US than many Gaullists—would have a benign impact on Franco-US relations. A government so composed would be more cooperative within the Atlantic Alliance, take a less intransigent stand in Brussels on many aspects of EC relations with the US and, perhaps over time, take a more positive line on the Middle East and other foreign policy issues. The degree of influence the centrists could exert, however, would depend on how crucial their support is and on what ministerial posts they occupy.

In the third situation—even heavier Gaullist losses—the President might well resort to the so-called "Edgar Faure solution." He would turn to Faure, who, though not a party member, is the acknowledged leader of the Gaullist left wing. Faure would be asked to form a government whose support would range from the right wing of the Socialist Party through the center to the left wing of the present coalition. Such a solution would have some appeal to those Socialists who feel uneasy in harness with the Communists. Under such a government, if one could be formed and survive for any length of time, fairly radical departures in economic and social policy could be expected. In foreign affairs, it would probably emphasize to a much more pronounced degree French independence from the US and "special relationship" with the USSR. Still, the US would probably be able to maintain a reasonable working relationship with a Faure government, but it is difficult to imagine that the cooperation would be very close. There might be some improvement, from the US point of view, in certain areas where Paris is at odds with Washington, since a Faure coalition might perceive French interests in a fashion different from the present government and be less rigidly attached to certain "Gaullist" principles.

The fourth situation—a leftist victory—would bring a prolonged period of political and institutional turmoil. There would be a prolonged hostile confrontation between the President and the parliament. The constitution of the Fifth Republic provides no sure guidelines. France, for example, now has a popularly elected President endowed with significant powers, and this fact makes it most unlikely that the old predominance of parliament would be revived.



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Although the assembly could refuse to pass desired legislation, that would presuppose a continued unity of views on diverse issues in the opposition. Moreover, the assembly no longer has unlimited competence in the field of legislation. Its rights have been restricted to more basic pieces of legislation and to the budget, so that the government can often get along without assembly concurrence. The executive takes the initiative in proposing most bills which eventually become law and has rather broad powers to issue implementing decrees and ordinances. There is even authority for the cabinet to adopt an interim budget if the assembly fails to act in time. Many other detailed provisions of the constitution make it easier for the cabinet to manage the lawmakers, including the government's power to restrict the active agenda of parliament, which is in regular session less than six months a year.

The President has other options for dealing with a leftist assembly. He could name a minority government of his own supporters and challenge the left to overthrow it by censure procedure. In late December, Prime Minister Messmer stated categorically that, regardless of the election results, the President would pick one of his own supporters to lead the new government. Pompidou himself has hinted broadly that the appointment of Mitterrand—much less Marchais—is out of the question. If the left doesn't like this, it will find that censure is a difficult procedure because a majority of all deputies—not just those present and voting—is necessary and only a limited number of censure motions can be presented during a session. A move for censure would immediately test the cohesiveness of a left coalition which, in the absence of a substantial majority in the assembly, might find it difficult to impose the necessary discipline on its heterogeneous troops.

If the left did manage to pass a censure motion, the President would be obliged to dissolve the government. He would be in an unhappy dilemma. On the one hand, he has acknowledged, "The authority of a state which does not rest on the confidence of the French people and on democracy would not be tolerated for long." On the other hand, it seems highly unlikely that he would try to govern in tandem with a leftist prime minister. Although Pompidou has not specified what he would do if his coalition cannot form a majority, he has said, in cryptic fashion, "I will draw my conclusions" from a leftist victory.

He might instead dissolve the assembly and call for another election. He would proceed cautiously in this direction, since the left could make further gains in a second election. The leftists could call upon trade unions to harass the government through strike activity and protests. They would be constrained in such tactics, however, by their efforts to develop an image of conformity to the norms of democracy and by their recollection of how the government exploited the disruptions in 1968. In choosing whether to push for a second election, the leftists would also have to weigh the possibility that the electorate might well have second thoughts when faced with the reality of a strong leftist position in the assembly.

Pompidou has a number of other weapons at hand to block an attempt by a leftist assembly to force a change in government. He could exercise one of several presidential prerogatives in addition to dissolving the assembly. Article 16 of the constitution provides that the president may rule by decree under extraordinary circumstances. He alone decides when the situation is sufficiently extraordinary to justify such rule and when the circumstances have passed. Although the assembly cannot be dissolved during this period, there is no mechanism by which it can impose its will on the president and thus virtually no constitutional checks which set limits on the decisions of the President. Pompidou would be likely to use this power only if a leftist victory at the polls were followed by a very serious breakdown of public order.

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Article 11 of the Constitution provides that the President, on the proposal of the government during an assembly session, may submit to the people a referendum dealing with "the organization of the governmental authorities."

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The President is prohibited by the Constitution from dissolving the assembly more than once in a 12-month period. Therefore, if a leftist government were returned to power in a second legislative election, Pompidou would either have to accommodate himself to it or resign from the presidency. If he resigned, new presidential elections would have to be held within two months. Only after all of these steps were taken and a leftist candidate were elected president would the left have "come to power." France is still far from such an eventuality. [redacted]

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